

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL,
DISSENTING**

Re: *2014 Quadrennial Regulatory Review—Review of the Commission’s Broadcast Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996; 2010 Quadrennial Regulatory Review—Review of the Commission’s Broadcast Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996; Promoting Diversification of Ownership in the Broadcasting Services; Rules and Policies Concerning Attribution of Joint Sales Agreements in Local Television Markets; Rules and Policies to Promote New Entry and Ownership Diversity in the Broadcasting Services*, MB Docket Nos. 14-50, 09-182, 07-294, 04-256, 17-289, Order on Reconsideration and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (November 16, 2017)

There was a time when we waited in the morning for the news to hit the front stoop in print and on paper. Then we waited at night, huddled around the glow of a single television screen, for the evening news. Those days are long gone. The world has changed. Not one of us expects our news and information to be available in such a limited way. Every one of us now looks for content at any time, in any place, and on any screen handy.

This is exciting. But let’s be honest, it’s also challenging. The economic models that sustained traditional newsgathering have been forever changed by digitization—and while new platforms are multiplying, what is viral is not always verifiable.

If you need an object lesson in why this is true, look at how fast false information spread following last month’s deadly attack in Las Vegas. The same happened following the recent shooting in Texas. Inaccurate information during Hurricane Season increased the peril for those who were stranded in rough winds and high waters. Untangling what is really happening with tax policy, health care policy, or anything else is a tough task. Knowing what sources to trust, what facts to rely on, and which authorities to credit are things we need to do as citizens. It’s a big job—with real consequences. Consider that we are only starting to tally the scope of the falsehoods peddled during election season and still struggling to understand the ramifications.

This is a challenge. When frothy stuff takes hold online and inaccurately informs our actions we have a problem. When disinformation has greater velocity than real information, we have a problem. When filter bubbles emerge that never force us to consider what might be happening on the outside we have an issue.

These are not easy matters because they involve complicated questions. How do we advance journalism when algorithms are ascendant? How do we advance trust in real facts instead of dismissing them as fake news? This is hard. There are no simple answers. But I do know this: the solution doesn’t lie in the FCC scrapping from top to bottom its policies to prevent media concentration.

For decades, at the direction of Congress, the FCC maintained limits on the number of broadcast stations that a single company can own. The agency curbed the ability to own broadcast stations and newspapers in the same market. The agency prevented a single entity from owning multiple television stations and radio stations in the same market. These policies were designed to sustain media diversity, localism, and competition. Those values may not be especially trendy, but I think they are solid. I think they support journalism and jobs. I think they play a critical role in advancing the mix of facts we all need to make decisions about our lives, our communities, and our country.

Today the FCC dismantles those values. Instead of engaging in thoughtful reform—which we should do—this agency sets its most basic values on fire. They are gone. As a result of this decision, wherever you live the FCC is giving the green light for a single company to own the newspaper and multiple television and radio stations in your community. I am hard pressed to see any commitment to diversity, localism, or competition in that result.

We should be troubled. Because we are not going to remedy what ails our media today with this rush of new consolidation. We are not going to fix our ability to ferret fact from fiction by doubling down on just a handful of companies controlling our public airwaves. We are not going to be able to remedy the way the highest level in government is now comfortable stirring up angry sentiment, denouncing news as false facts, and bestowing favors on outlets with narratives that flatter those in power rather than offer the hard-hitting assessments we need as citizens. Instead we clear the way for more mergers of greater magnitude—like the one presently before us—which will benefit heartily from the destruction of these policies today.

Finally, a note on diversity. Media ownership matters because what we see on our screens says so much about who we are as individuals, as communities, and as a nation. Study a bit of history and you can only come to one conclusion: consolidation will make our stations look less and less like the communities they serve. Women and minorities have struggled for too long to take the reins at media outlets. A modest rulemaking on an incubator isn't going to get us where we need to go. It's a high price to pay for the damage this order does and that is an exchange I am unwilling to make.

I dissent.